



CHANGE OF DICTION FROM TRADITIONAL LEXIS TO COMPUTER LEXIS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF NORTH BY THE NORTHWEST (1959) AND GHOST IN THE SHELL (2017)

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Abstract

This study seeks to analyze the old or traditional lexis of English language and the newly emerged form or computerized form of language under the specific techno-social circumstances. This research is based on a comparative study of two films that includes North by the Northwest (1959) to analyze the simple or traditional diction. The other movie is a latest science fiction film Ghost in the Shell (2017) that is to be analyzed for the new emerging form of language produced due to the rapid growth of different social websites and electronic discourses. This change has critically analyzed through the Internet Linguistics under the Sociolinguistic Perspective. After a detailed literature review the researchers have designed the research questions in order to analyze the above mentioned transformation. The particular study questions certain facts with reference to the specific historical background and Sociolinguistic context. Crystal (2004) has introduced a new variety of English language that is born and sandwiched within the scientific and computerized inventions. This two layered comparison has projected the particular societal impacts on different fields of life especially its affective relation with English, which is a global language.



Keywords: Traditional lexis, Computerized lexis, Sociolinguistic, English, Internet

1.1 Introduction

English is a widely spoken language after Mandarin, Chinese and Spanish. The well-known fact is that English being an international language has become the official language of so many other countries where it is not even the native language. Old English with the invasion of Anglo-Saxons (Old English brought by the Germanic invaders) came to the forefront in 6th century that was firstly spoken by the lower class, eventually, with the flood of Renaissance it got spread throughout the world. After travelling about four centuries throughout the world it is now well-recognized and the most spoken language that is known and spoken approximately in every country of the world. Within the specific context of geographical, Sociolinguistic and after passing through the process of colonization a lot of changes occurred in the vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar of English. New varieties in English language are also introduced due to colonialization and creolization but this research specifically deals with the lexical changes that have occurred in English language due to the manipulation of computerized discourse. There are variations in many features as we compare it to the traditional form or diction. Old, Middle and Modern English are the classified varieties that have some historical differences among them.

There is an interesting fact that modern English, which is spoken in this postmodern age, is completely different from the one that used to be spoken in the old era. Language has a history of around 1700 years and the old English was a combination or mixture of dialects because there were different tribes that conquered Britain that time. Historically speaking, Anglo Saxon dialect and variety were the main components of old English. Middle English (11th century) is the time period of Norman conquests in the region of Britain that has caused a great variation in English language. The duke of Normandy William conquered England in 1066 and this invasion brought newness into Saxon variety of language due to amalgamation of French language. Renaissance in 15th century brought about much more changes in the linguistic features from many perspectives because it is considered to be a starting point of modern age. It was the era when new discoveries and inventions affected the ways and the lives of people in a real manner. On the account of these changes it also caused a great change in the colors and shades of English language and culture. Industrial revolution of Victorian age (19th cen.) also contributed in the structure of English language that is named as the late modern language, which has its own diverse and varied vocabulary from the early versions (Crystal 2004).¹

Present day English language is quite different from the previous background as in each and every era language is affected by different tools for instance education, technology and literature. Due to these reasons a new form of language emerged. Remarkable impacts specifically on language

¹ David Crystal, *Language and the Internet* (Cambridge: Cambridge university press, 2004).



are due to the rapid growth and advancement of electronic communication, technological transformation and globalized system of the postmodern world. It has witnessed the appearance of a new form of language that may be considered as an electronic discourse. English linguist Crystal (2005) has declared this technology and electronic affected domain as an internet linguistics, which has introduced new language styles and forms born and bred under the influence of globalization. Short Message Service (SMS) text messaging on such apps like Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and Instagram are the postmodern concepts that have become accepted platforms for producing literary pieces, publishing books and journals. Internet linguistic is contributing in terms of web interface and usability.

For the present study the researchers seek to scrutinize the change of diction from traditional lexis to computer lexis in the selected Hollywood movies *North by the Northwest* (1959) and *Ghost in the shell* (2017). This study is based on the conceptual framework of Crystal's (2004) Internet Linguistics from the domain of Sociolinguistic Perspective. This study is significant to analyze the emerging variety of language due to the influence of current technology-oriented age. As from the literature review it is clear that none of the researchers before have conducted such type of linguistic transformation in the forms of literature (film). This research plays a vital role to provide a comparative analysis of historical discourse and the existing contemporary language. This study provides an insight into the important features of language affected by the World Wide Web and spread social networking. Not only scholars, researchers but also the common readers would be the beneficiaries of this study. This study reveals about the traditional form of lexis that has changed due to Sociolinguistic variations in the terms of electronic discourses of computer lexis. As Crystal (2004) claims that the internet is a new domain for the future research so it opens ways for new knowledge and information.

1.2 Review of Related Literature

The electronic age is greatly serving human life through its unlimited services from minor tasks to the very major ones. Postmodern portrayal of the world shows that how technology has become the main pivot on which modern civilization turns from learning, teaching, publishing to online jobs and business. The smart phones and other technological gadgets are products of this electronic age (age of Information technology). Although Internet Linguistic is a new field for research and study but many analysts have tossed light on its importance and the literary development through the internet from different perspectives.

According to Crystal there are various perspectives of the Internet Linguistics such as; sociolinguistic perspective, educational perspective, stylistic perspective, and applied perspective. Sociolinguistic perspective deals with the stylistic variation in the language due to the influence of internet as a social technological commodity. Crystal suggests:



This is the area which has attracted most public attention, because people notice informality in language use and worry about it... they gathered when printing was introduced, in the 15th century, as well as when the telephone was introduced in the 19th, and when the broadcasting came along in the 20th; and they gathered again when it was noticed that Internet writing broke several of the rules of formal standard English- in such areas as punctuation, capitalization and spelling. (2005: 2)²

Nazaryan and Aleksandra (2006)³ worked on the 'email stress', under the phenomenon of influence of internet on language. It shows that how internet is a ruling factor in human life in almost every field of life. More specifically it is serving as an educator for other media. It is a noticeable fact that this recent and latest trend of internet has completely changed the mode of human interaction and has produced a novel kind of interaction between individuals and various websites. Individuals who use online websites and are involved in the internet communication are known as 'Netizens' whereas the language that is spoken on internet is enormously called as 'Netspeak'. These are considered to be the most influential tools for human/computer interaction. Macfadyen (2006)⁴ has investigated the internet and computer-mediated communications. He asserts that communicative environments are constructed through language for which the main source may be text. Written language is facilitated by cyberspace it is not only a human-computer interface but the human-human interface as well. Researchers belonging to different fields of technology have declared cyber-language as text, semiotic system and socio-cultural discourse and even as a source of cultural hegemony. They have even called English as the internet lingua franca. These different perspectives have necessarily shaped the investigation about cyber-language in order to analyze this interface for which the details of online text and social contexts are critically scrutinized.

Technologies have actually shaped various contexts for social interaction (social media) and have focused on the role of media in human activities specifically in the process of social interaction. In this regard new ways of communication technology has influenced the social interaction and language usage among the individuals of visual language community. New media technologies

² David Crystal, "The Scope of Internet Linguistics," *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 10, no. 4 (2005), https://www.academia.edu/25029819/Texting_language_Internet_linguistics_.

³ Ani Nazaryan and Gridchin Aleksandra, "The Influence of Internet on Language and Email Stress," *Journal of Art and Humanities* 4, no.1 (2006): 23-27, <http://facta.junis.ni.ac.rs/lap/lap2006/lap2006-03.pdf>.

⁴ Leas Macfadyen, "The Language of Cyberspace," in *Encyclopedia of Human Computer Interaction*, ed. Claude Ghaoui (London: Idea Group Reference, 2006).



have affected the social interaction and language is highly stimulated by such a technological progress. In this regard McGrath (2012)⁵ has conducted a research to analyze the extent to which video games, computer games, internet, emails and mobile phone have influenced the everyday life in a technologically advance society of current arena.

Abu Sa'aleek (2015)⁶ has worked in the field of internet and introduced the electronic discourse as a new field and a new variety of language for different purposes. It may be for education and research in order to research under the quantitative mode of inquiry. Electronic discourse is a significant and emerging variety of language that automatically leads to distinctions and variations. Not only in spoken dialects but also follows a conspicuous change in written expressions and narratives because it has its own system of graphology. Through the analysis it is documented that English has made use of e-discourse that has reduced the process of communication.

The researchers have developed a conceptual framework of Sociolinguistic perspective (Internet Linguistics) by Crystal (2004) after detecting the gaps in existing literature that is used both as a method and theory of analysis. By the application of this conceptual framework the researchers have clearly defined the idea that how sociolinguistic factors may be the most remarkable point to change the form of diction from traditional and simple to quite complicated and scientific terminologies based diction.

1.3 Conceptual Framework

This paper is grounded in Sociolinguistic descriptive qualitative mode of inquiry and do not follow the numerical or statistical design for the purpose of data analysis. Data analysis is based upon the conceptual framework of Sociolinguistic Perspective by Crystal (2004) from the Internet Linguistics. Internet Linguistics is used both as a method and theory for analysis. The tools of analysis are words and dialogues spoken by different characters in various scenes. For this purpose two movies: *North by the Northwest* (1959) and *Ghost in the Shell* (2017) are selected in order to compare the change of diction from simple to computerized form.

⁵ Siobhan McGrath, "The Impact of New Media Technologies on Social Interaction in the Household," *Department of Sociology, National University of Ireland Maynooth*, 2012, <http://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sites/default/files>.

⁶ Abu Sa'aleek, "A Linguistic Analysis of Electronic Discourse as a New Variety of Language," *International Journal of English Linguistics* 5, no.1 (2015), <http://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/ijel/article/view/42111>.



Idea of Sociolinguistics Perspective deals with the changes caused by societal elements as the advent of internet has changed the mode and medium of communication. Thus, internet is considered to be a great domain for social networking system, which encourages the usage of technical language. The above literature review has led to the following research questions:

Q1. How traditional lexis is used in the film *North by the Northwest* (1959)?

Q2. How the terminology of computer lexis is highlighted under Sociolinguistic Perspective in the film *Ghost in the Shell* (2017)?

11.4 Data Analysis

The critical discussion is based on Internet Linguistics (Sociolinguistic Perspective) analysis and the content (words and dialogues) is critically discussed through the above mentioned conceptual framework provided by the linguist Crystal (2004). Sociolinguistic states that language under specific social circumstances gets change. Therefore, this study revolves around the change of diction from traditional lexis to computer lexis. In order to analyze the occurred changes in language the electronic age; computer technology and its every day changing apps and social networking is explained below. Consequently, two selected Hollywood films *North by the Northwest* (1959) and *Ghost in the Shell* (2017) are analyzed to form a comparative analysis of lexical change.

North by the Northwest (1959) completely portrays fictional elements of the specific modern time period of 1950s. The usage of technology is also according to the specific culture and society. Whereas, diction or language used in the film is based on quite simple phenomenon. Thereof, simple, casual and routine words are used throughout the film. The vocabulary used in various dialogues contains quite simple words and the language is free from every kind of any scientific or newly invented terminologies. Different dialogues in various scenes delineate that even being a thriller fiction of 1950s *North by the Northwest* still has quite simple and straight diction. Plot of the film represents the modern age novelties of New York: an executive Roger O' Thornhill is shown followed by the brutal Phillip Vandamm. After Thornhill is misrecognized as one of the government secret agents the story revolves around the struggles of Roger O' that resulted in a number of iconic actions. Following dialogues from the film show the quality of language according to 1950s Sociolinguistics' structure:

Roger O' Thornhill: "In the world of advertising, there's no such thing as a lie. There's only expedient exaggeration."

Woman: "One thing we know. You're no fake; you're a genuine idiot."

Phillip Vandamm: "Has anyone ever told you that you overplay your various roles rather severely, Mr. Kaplan?"



*Phillip Vandamm: "You're a bit taller than I expected, a little more polished."*⁷

The above representative dialogues taken from the film represent a simple diction and traditional lexis system. Whereas, this is a film, which is considered to be a classical piece for its cinematography and its visual effects but still by scrutinizing the theme and the dialogues it depicts that is quite a simple piece of fiction. Internet Linguistics suggests that the language is actually produced and propagated under some specific social circumstances. It is aptly exemplified through the above analysis that 1950s though was a modern period according to the then perspective still there was the simplest form of diction; representing the social setup that was not transformed or manipulated by the language of mass media and technological progress.

To the contrary *Ghost in the Shell* (2017) is based on the life of a female robot. This part of the critical discussion characterizes the analysis of second research questions. For this analysis represents the changed lexis of postmodern times. It focuses on different terminologies used in the film for the film is mostly made under the concept of cyberspace, which is famous for its conception of virtual themes. No doubt, all the scenes are technology oriented yet apart from the visual effects scientific terminologies like computer hackers, cyberterrorists, cyberspace, cyborgs, cybernetic eyes and restored memories are used in the film. These words project a specific computer based lexis, which reflects the occurred transformation in English language. The dialogues from the movie actually show that how soft word lexicon is influential and it is really remarkable from Sociolinguistic paradigm. All the quoted references shows that how social circumstances and technological advancement has affected human psyche and language. The diction is changed from traditional and simple to extreme computerized and complex lexis. Following dialogues uttered by the Puppet master has enhanced the idea of computerized diction in a better way:

Life perpetuates itself through diversity, and this includes the ability to sacrifice itself when necessary. Cells repeat the process of degeneration and regeneration until one day they die, obliterating an entire set of memory and information. Only genes remain. Why continually repeat this cycle? Simply to survive by avoiding the weaknesses of an unchanging system.

Some more dialogues by different characters further highlight the computerized lexis of the film: "Dr. Oulete: "We cling to memories as if they define us, but... they really don't. What we do is

⁷ Alfred Hitchcock (producer and director), *North by the Northwest* (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, U.S.A: Chicago, 1959).



what defines us.” Aramaki: “You are more than just a weapon. You have a soul... a ghost. When we see our uniqueness as a virtue, only then will we find peace.”⁸

These references show the changed and newly introduced form of diction due to rapid social networking and technological advancement. Language serves as a kind of tool in the hands of individuals and situations. Hence, virtual world and its netizens have introduced a new form of language promoted and influenced by computer technology.

1.5 Findings

The findings of the research suggest that in the contemporary era of information technology and computer based/generated knowledge none of the phenomenon of world is free from technological influence. The film *North by the Northwest* though modern and trendy according to 1950s still projected a simple and casual form of diction with less or completely no lexical changes based on computerized diction. To the contrary, *Ghost in the Shell* has delineated a complex computerized diction that no doubt, represents a deep philosophy.

1.6 Conclusion

Thus, the conclusion of this study draws upon this statement that it is true and obviously recognized philosophy that language is greatly affected by social circumstances. Language goes through transformation in a society where it is spoken and used for different purposes. This study has analyzed the Sociolinguistic Perspective of language by Crystal (2004) in the Hollywood films *North by the Northwest* (1959) and *Ghost in the Shell* (2017). Application of the selected conceptual frameworks has clarified the concept of traditional lexis and computer lexis in both the films, respectively, that has generated a comparative analysis. It has stated that technological advancement is the main cause in order to affect the strategies of any language. In the case of analysis it is especially the English language, which has become the language of technology. Thus English is the only language that flexibly accepts the sociolinguistic impacts and goes through various modifications and conversions in different societies.

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⁸ A. Arad (producer) and R. Sander (director), *Ghost in the Shell* (DreamWork picture, U.S.A: Reliance Entertainment, 2017).



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